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### **Annual Connecting Women to Power Business Conference Becomes Largest in the State**

This year's 2013 Connecting Women to Power Business Conference at California State University's Dominguez Hills campus turned out to be a perfect complement to the state's upward changing economic fortunes.

As California begins to enjoy a significant drop in unemployment, more than 1,600 small business women and entrepreneurs gathered to meet and celebrate their strength in powering the state forward. The conference, hosted by Board of Equalization Chairman, Jerome E. Horton discussed how to capitalize on tax credits, expand business overseas, how to access venture capital, and use a host of other business-building strategies.

"I am so pleased to have again co-hosted this event," said Horton, who along with his wife Yvonne Horton, City Clerk of Inglewood, spearheaded the event. "It is becoming more and more important for women in small business to connect, compare notes, and learn from one another. When the first two women shook hands this morning, that's what happened."

What was also uplifting to attendees was a recently announced change by the Small Business Administration to lift the caps on the contract award size for which women-owned small businesses and economically disadvantaged, women-owned small businesses compete. This is the result of a 2010 SBA ruling that expands federal contracting opportunities for women-owned small businesses.

Meanwhile, state unemployment figures show a 0.4 percent drop in the state's unemployment rate, the biggest drop in five years. Women business owners were encouraged to take risks and expand their business so the job market can keep pace.

The Honorable Hilda Solis, President Obama's former Secretary of Labor, delivered the keynote address. "My main message was that women need to be engaged; they need to utilize social media in emerging technologies, especially green technologies," said Ms. Solis.

The free, all-day conference has grown rapidly from 800 women business owners and entrepreneurs the first year, to more than 1,600 in 2013. Chairman Horton said he is not surprised by the conference's growing popularity, because it underscores his vision to provide women business owners with every means possible to advance their business enterprises in Southern California.

Bonitta Hazelwood, owner of Bonitta's Doorstep Catering Service: "I'm always willing to learn different things about how to better and grow my business."

Cheryl McKnight/California State University, Dominguez Hills' Committee Engagement Department: "I was thrilled to be here. There was so much going on. This conference should have lasted three days!"

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Elected in 2010, Chairman Jerome E. Horton is the Fourth District Member of the California State Board of Equalization, representing more than 8.5 million residents in Los Angeles County. He is also the Board of Equalization's Legislative Committee Chairman. He is the first to serve on the Board of Equalization with over 21 years of experience at the BOE. Horton previously served as an Assembly Member of the California State Assembly from 2000-2006.

The five-member California State Board of Equalization is a publicly elected tax board. The Board of Equalization collects more than \$53.7 billion annually in taxes and fees supporting state and local government services. It hears business tax appeals, acts as the appellate body for franchise and personal income tax appeals, and serves a significant role in the assessment and administration of property taxes. For more information on other taxes and fees in California, visit [www.taxes.ca.gov](http://www.taxes.ca.gov).

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